

SPEECH

OF

MR. HOFFMAN, OF NEW YORK,

ON THE MOTION TO

INSTRUCT THE COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS

TO

REPORT A BILL APPROPRIATING ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS

TO EACH OF THE

STATES OF OHIO, INDIANA, AND ILLINOIS,

FOR THE CONTINUATION OF

THE CUMBERLAND ROAD.

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Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 12, 1840.

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## S P E E C H.

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Mr. HOFFMAN said: It is not my intention Mr. Speaker to discuss the merits of the Cumberland road, or urge its claims upon the justice and liberality of this House. Such a task, had I the ability to execute it, I feel would be unnecessary, after the powerful and augmentative speech of the gentleman from Ohio, (Mr. MASON.) My only object is to call the attention of the House to the character of these "instructions" which are asked for, and the unfortunate auspices, for such I consider them, under which this road is now commended to our support.

I am not one of those, Mr. Speaker, who entertain doubts as to the constitutional power of our Government to devote some of its means and resources to works of internal improvement. Nor do I think that money so employed is wastefully or prodigally expended. No, sir, on the contrary, I believe that every dollar that is appropriated and judiciously and prudently expended upon works called for by the "general welfare of the nation," is "like bread cast upon the waters, which, after many days, shall return to us."

I believe that the fortifications of our country are the best preventives in peace against the calamities of war, and in war the best preservatives of our property and fame, and I therefore believe that every dollar that is appropriated for them is so much expended for our national security and honor. I believe that the improvements of our harbors and our rivers, and the erection of our light-houses, are necessary for the protection of that commerce which has made this nation what she is—the second commercial nation of the world; and I therefore believe that the money devoted to these important and useful purposes will be repaid us fifty and a hundred fold by the wealth which that commerce will pour into our national coffers. I regard the system of internal improvement, judiciously prosecuted, as one great source of our wealth, prosperity, and happiness. And when I look at my own State, and see her canals, planned by the far-reaching wisdom of her Clinton, sanctioned by her legislative councils, and completed by the enterprise of her citizens, now groaning with the fruits of her industry, I confess that my convictions are confirmed and my attachments increased to the great cause of internal improvement. I believe that all roads and canals called for by the wants of the people, made by individuals or by companies, or, if too great for their re-

sources, made or aided by the State or General Government, are so many links in that great chain which binds our Union together, and, by the facilities which they afford for daily communication, for the intercourse of friendship, for the true knowledge of the feelings and manners which characterize the distinct and remote parts of our common country, do more to preserve that Union than all the untiring efforts of fanaticism, or the violent denunciations of utralism on this floor can, to dissolve or to destroy it.

With these views which I entertain, I stop not to ask myself how that State which I in part represent on this floor, or how that city which has honored me with her confidence, and entrusted to me, in part, the protection of her interests, and the defence of her rights, will be benefited by the prosecution of the Cumberland road—for I believe that every measure the object or the result of which will be to develop the resources of any one section, equally raises the power and increases the wealth of every other section of our common country. I endeavor to soar above sectional jealousies, and am ready to support every measure, whether in the North, the South, the East, or the West, which will add to the wealth or contribute to the happiness of these *United States*. But I also go upon higher grounds than the mere calculation of dollars and cents—than the immediate benefits that this road will confer upon those who will directly participate in its advantages or partake of its benefits. I look upon it as a great national road—as a monument to stand in aftertimes to record the wisdom and patriotism of those who planned and those who sustained it—a monument which will be regarded by those who come after us with the same enthusiasm with which the classic scholar now looks to the Appian way—that “Queen of Ways”—“*Regina Viarum*”—a way which is remembered with the glories of Rome—a way which has handed down to us by its name the fame of that Censor who conceived and executed it—of that Censor who, when grown blind and old in the service of his country, caused himself to be carried into the Senate-house, and, by his eloquence, raised Rome “from her capitulating fears,” and dissuaded from a peace with Pyrrhus and the Tarentines, which would have been dishonorable to the Roman name.

I need not say, then, sir, that I am a friend to this road—a friendship proved not by my professions now, but by my former votes; and to the Journal of this House I will appeal to attest the truth of what I say. As such friend, I feel that I can speak to its other friends freely and frankly, and express to them, without impeachment of my motives, my sincere regrets that it is now presented to us under circumstances which are not calculated to enlist our sympathies; nay, which are almost powerful enough to cool our friendship.

In the last Congress, out of the seven Representatives from Indiana, six were opponents of the present Administration, and acted with that party to which I have the honor to belong. They were gentlemen of character and intelligence, and are remembered, I have no doubt, by gentlemen of all parties, who were members of the last Congress, with kindness and affection. They were an honor to their constituents, and faithfully did they endeavor to promote their welfare. The Cum-

berland road they believed to be identified with the great interests of their young and growing State, and to obtain appropriations for its prosecution, their time and their energies were devoted ; for this measure they labored incessantly, " in season and out of season ;" and, by one of them, the gentleman who is now near me, (Mr. RARIDEN,) the only one of the six who has survived the last political campaign, and has come again to this House to tell the tale of their defeat, a motion was made on the last night of the last session " That the House do resolve itself into Committee of the Whole House on the bill from the Senate (No. 53) making appropriations for the continuation of the Cumberland road."

This motion was lost, 74 voting for it, and 77 against it. Nearly every Whig north of the Potomac voting for it ; and, of the 77 against it, more than 52 were the supporters of the administration ; Mr. BOON, the only administration member from Indiana, being absent from his seat. One would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that this vote would have satisfied the people of Indiana in which of the two political parties the friends of the road were to be found, and with the triumph of what principles their success would be identified. Let the sequel prove how well or how ill-founded was such a supposition. Congress adjourned ; no appropriation for the prosecution of this road was made ; the members from Indiana returned to their homes to render up to a generous people, who they believed would not estimate exertion by success, nor let labor and zeal for their interest be forgotten, because the end did not crown the work, an account of their stewardship.

But what, sir, was the result ? The moment the political contest again commenced, and they were presented as candidates for re-election to this body, the whole administration press of the State opened its battery upon them ; and to Whig inefficiency, and to Whig lukewarmness, was attributed the defeat of the Cumberland road. The " Indiana Democrat," published in the district of one of the honorable gentlemen now on this floor, (Mr. WICK ;) the " Wabash Inquirer," in the district of another honorable gentleman, (Mr. DAVIS ;) the " New Albany Argus ;" the " Jeffersonian ;" all joined in and swelled the cry against the Whig candidates for Congress, and united in declaring to the people of Indiana that the success of this road could only be secured by discarding their former faithful servants, and electing in their stead friends of the Administration, which friends were the very honorable gentlemen who now represent that State, and urge us to adopt these instructions. (These facts I give as they have been given to me ; and of course rest upon the information of others.) But, sir, not only did the press adopt this course towards their political opponents, but I am told that some of the honorable gentlemen from that State—I mean those who live upon the line of the road, and were in the midst of constituents whose feelings and whose interests were involved in its success—some of these honorable gentlemen—I speak as I am told—who are now in my eye, upon the hustings echoed this language of the press in opposition to their adversaries, and in favor of themselves, and, upon the stump, declared to the assembled people that the appropriation for the road was lost because

its advocates from that State were not friends to the Powers at Washington—that the President and his Cabinet were anxious for the prosecution and completion of this road, but that they would not and could not indicate that friendship in concert with those who were politically opposed to them—that the people of Indiana, if they desired this road, must be true to their own interests, and send to the House of Representatives supporters of the Administration; with such supporters the Administration would act cordially and efficiently, and that their united efforts would secure to the good people of that State the boon for which they prayed. Nay, sir, I am told that one of these honorable gentlemen has since gone so far as to pledge himself for its success, and has declared that, unless this bill should be passed during the first session of this Congress, he would resign and return here no more. I do not blame them for this course, for I have no right to sit in judgment upon the conduct of others out of this House; and I well know that—

“He who stands upon a slippery place,  
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.”

I do not blame them, although I regret that a generous people could be deluded by such professions, and duped by such pledges. The result we all know. These denunciations, these arguments, professions, promises, and pledges were successful; and the honorable gentlemen to whom I allude, friends to the Administration, now represent Indiana in this House, and urge us to anticipate the deliberations of a standing committee, and pass, “in hot haste,” these instructions, that they may fulfil their promises and redeem their pledges to the people. These gentlemen are, indeed, friends to the Administration—friends true and devoted—as every vote given upon this floor, from the election of a printer to the disfranchisement of a sovereign State, will abundantly prove. They are friends to the Administration; and let us stop for a moment and see how that friendship has been returned, and how the people of Indiana have been rewarded *by the President and his Secretary of the Treasury for their abandonment of their old, and the election of their new servants.*

The President, in his annual message, impresses again upon us, in his usual strain, *usque ad nauseam*, the “necessity of severe economy as the surest provision for the national welfare, and the best preservative of the principles on which our institutions rest;” and admonishes us “by the necessity which a decreasing revenue imposes against national prodigality, under whatever specious pretext it may have been introduced or fostered.” He tells us “if the payments due from the banks during the next year shall be punctually made, and if Congress shall keep the appropriations within the estimates, there is every reason to believe that all the outstanding Treasury notes can be redeemed, and the ordinary expenses defrayed, without imposing on the people any additional burden, either of loans or increased taxes.” Let me read to the House the part of the message to which I refer.

“The nineteen millions of Treasury notes authorized by the act of Congress of 1837, and the modifications thereof, with a view to the indulgence of merchants on their duty bonds, and of the deposit banks in the payment of public moneys

held by them, have been so punctually redeemed as to leave less than the original ten millions outstanding at any one time, and the whole amount unredeemed now falls short of three millions. Of these, the chief portion is not due till next year; and the whole would have been already extinguished could the Treasury have realized the payments due to it from the banks. If those due from them during the next year shall be punctually made, and if Congress shall keep the appropriations within the estimates, there is every reason to believe that all the outstanding Treasury notes can be redeemed, and the ordinary expenses defrayed, without imposing on the people any additional burden, either of loans or increased taxes.

“To avoid this, and to keep the expenditures within reasonable bounds, is a duty, second only in importance to the preservation of our national character, and the protection of our citizens in their civil and political rights. The creation, in time of peace, of a debt likely to become permanent, is an evil for which there is no equivalent. The rapidity with which many of the States are apparently approaching to this condition, admonishes us of our own duties, in a manner too impressive to be disregarded. One, not the least important, is to keep the Federal Government always in a condition to discharge, with ease and vigor, its highest functions, should their exercise be required by any sudden conjuncture of public affairs—a condition to which we are always exposed, and which may occur when it is least expected. To this end, it is indispensable that its finances should be untrammelled, and its resources, as far as practicable, unencumbered. No circumstance could present greater obstacles to the accomplishment of these vitally important objects than the creation of an onerous national debt. Our own experience, and also that of other nations, have demonstrated the unavoidable and fearful rapidity with which a public debt is increased when the Government has once surrendered itself to the ruinous practice of supplying its supposed necessities by new loans. The struggle, therefore, on our part, to be successful, must be made at the threshold. To make our efforts effective, severe economy is necessary. This is the surest provision for the national welfare; and it is, at the same time, the best preservative of the principles on which our institutions rest. Simplicity and economy in the affairs of state have never failed to chasten and invigorate republican principles, while these have been as surely subverted by national prodigality, under whatever specious pretexts it may have been introduced or fostered.

“These considerations cannot be lost upon a people who have never been inattentive to the effect of their policy upon the institutions they have created for themselves; but, at the present moment, their force is augmented by the necessity which a decreasing revenue must impose. The check lately given to importations of articles subject to duties, the derangements in the operations of internal trade, and, especially, the reduction gradually taking place in our tariff of duties, all tend materially to lessen our receipts; indeed, it is probable that the diminution resulting from the last cause alone will not fall short of five millions of dollars in the year 1842, as the final reduction of all duties to twenty per cent. then takes effect. The whole revenue then accruing from the customs, and from the sales of public lands, if not more, will undoubtedly be wanted to defray the necessary expenses of the Government, under the most prudent administration of its affairs. These are circumstances that impose the necessity of rigid economy, and require its prompt and constant exercise. With the Legislature rests the power and duty of so adjusting the public expenditure as to promote this end. By the provisions of the constitution, it is only in consequence of appropriations made by law that money can be drawn from the Treasury; no instance has occurred since the establishment of the Government, in which the Executive, though a component part of the legislative power, has interposed an objection to an appropriation bill on the sole ground of its extravagance. His duty, in this respect, has been considered fulfilled by requesting such appropriations only as the public service may be reasonably expected to require. In the present earnest direction of the public mind towards this subject, both the Executive and the Legislature have evidence of the strict responsibility to which they will be held; and, while I am conscious of my own anxious efforts to perform with fidelity this portion of my public functions, it is a satisfaction to me to be able to count on a cordial co-operation from you.”

Let me now refer to the estimates of the Secretary of the Treasury, which the President has "directed" to be subjected to the severest scrutiny, and to be limited to the absolute requirements of the public service, as contained in his annual report, laid upon the table of this House on the 24th December last :

*" Estimate of the receipts and expenditures for 1840.*

" For reasons hereafter to be explained, the receipts into the Treasury the ensuing year cannot be estimated so high as in 1839.

" From the best information possessed by this Department, it is computed that the aggregate of them available for public purposes will not exceed \$18,600,000, viz :

From customs	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$15,000,000
lands	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,500,000
miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000
Add to these the balance available and applicable to other purposes, which it is supposed will be in the Treasury on the 1st January, 1840	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,556,385

The efficient means in that year will then amount, in the aggregate, to	20,156,385
If Congress should make appropriations to the extent desired by the different Departments, the expenditures for 1840, independent of the redemption of Treasury notes, are estimated at	20,000,000

According to the opinions of the different Departments, as to the sums of money proper for each, and which constitute the basis of the estimates submitted to Congress, the new appropriations required for the next year will equal the sum of \$18,280,600 55, viz :

Civil, foreign intercourse, and miscellaneous	-	-	-	\$4,981,344 19
Military services, pensions, &c.	-	-	-	8,213,610 74
Naval service	-	-	-	5,085,645 62

" If Congress should make appropriations to the extent desired by the different Departments," is the language of the Secretary. All appropriations, therefore, not included in this annual estimate are not desired by the different Departments. The Cumberland road is not included in these estimates, and is therefore not "desired" by the Departments. And the Secretary afterwards expresses his expectation "that not much necessity will arise, either in the opinion of the Departments or of Congress, to make important additions to the sums now requested."

The object of the President and his Secretary, in this message and report to which I have referred, seems to be to impress upon the people the sincerity of the desires of the Government for economy and reform; and to induce the nation to believe that, with their wise and prudent management of the finances, unless they are defeated in their wishes by the prodigality of Congress, the receipts of the Treasury will be equal to the expenditures.

I will not now stop to inquire how true or how deceptive is this statement of the Secretary, but I will venture to assert that there is hardly a friend of the Administration on this floor who does not believe that this report is calculated to lull the people into a false security; who does not believe that without any extraordinary appropriations—I mean, by extraordinary appropriations, appropriations not

included in the Secretary's own estimate—the Secretary, before three months are ended, will be applying to us for means to meet the ordinary expenses of Government, for authority to create a loan, to issue more Treasury notes, or some other device to preserve the faith of the Government, and save the Treasury from bankruptcy.\* That such will be the case, the Government knows—the House more than fears; and the country will perceive before Congress adjourns how well grounded are those fears. But let this pass. My object is to show that the feelings of the President and his Secretary, as far as they are indicated by the message of the one and the report of the other, are not as favorable towards this great measure of internal improvement as they were last year, and as they have uniformly been since at least 1837. Every report of the Secretary, from 1837 till the present time, has contained an estimate for this road. In the report at the commencement of the session of 1838, the sum of \$450,000 was then “desired” by the Department for the prosecution of this road, to be distributed in the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, in the same proportions, sum for sum, and State for State, as are now designated in these “instructions” offered by the gentleman from Illinois. Why, then, I would ask, is such estimate now omitted? Why this change in the Secretary's views, or in “the desires of the Department?” If in 1837 and 1838, these estimates were “proper,” and called for by the great interests of those States and of the country, why are they not to be found in the estimates of the present year? Is it because the Treasury is now almost bankrupt? Was it not so last year? Did not poverty then pervade the land? Was there not then, as now, a want of confidence in the present, a hopelessness as to the future? Did not distrust and despair then, as now, sit brooding with heavy wings over every department of trade and industry? Was not then, as now, commerce fettered, industry paralyzed, by the same experiments upon our finances and our currency? Was not credit, the poor man's capital, as powerless then as it is now, to give vigor to his exertions, means to his labor, hopes to his enterprise, and bread to his family? Was not the Treasury then, as now, standing between want and beggary? Yes, sir; the very Congress that received the report containing the estimates for the Cumberland road beheld the same Secretary asking for authority to issue Treasury notes to meet the wants of the Government, and save the faith of the nation. Why, then, I would ask again, why now this change? The omission could not have been inadvertent or unintentional, for each annual report must have directed the attention of the Secretary to his former recommendations, and by no inadvertence, by no negligence, could he have forgotten these oft-repeated, often-sanctioned claims of the West. It is not for me to assign the motives which may have induced the Secretary, at former sessions of Congress, to consider appropriations for this road wise and proper, and

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\* The President has since this time, on the 17th of February, sent a communication to Congress from the Secretary of the Treasury, asking nearly five millions of Treasury notes.

which dictate to him now that silence is the part of policy, if not of patriotism.

For years these estimates have annually been presented to this House. Why are they now omitted? Some principle of public policy must have dictated the former estimates, and some motive must have led to the "direction" that they must be omitted now. Can it be that estimates for the prosecution of this road were included in all the former reports of the Secretary, because they were presented before those elections had taken place which were to determine the political character of this House, and upon Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois, the political ascendancy of his party upon this floor might depend? Because Indiana was then to be revolutionized, and the friends of the Administration were to appeal to the friendship of that Administration for the road, as their passports to this place? Because wavering, doubting Illinois was then to be secured to its allegiance, and the faith that was in Ohio was then to be strengthened and confirmed? Are the estimates now omitted, and is the Secretary "directed" to be silent now as to "the desires of the Department," because since the time of the last report and the 24th of December, when this one was presented to the House, the Harrisburg Convention have met, and presented for the suffrages of the West and of the people one around whom that West is rallying with enthusiasm and devotion—whose fame is identified with their earliest territorial history—who in peace was beloved by them as a benefactor, and in war revered as their protector—who, in the midst of savage warfare, with their gallant yeomanry by his side, perilled life in defence of their hearths, their children, and their wives? Are they omitted now because the President knows that against such claims to love and gratitude, professions, pledges, and promises are impotent and weak, and that, turning with despair from the West, he feels that the South—the South must be conciliated at every sacrifice? Or are they now omitted because the new friends with whom he is allied demand this adherence to their strict construction of the powers of Government, and this submission to their constitutional hostility to internal improvement, so that, in the very honey-moon of their alliance, nothing must be said to interrupt their mutual joy and dalliance? Let every honest man upon this floor, who has observed and noted how every great principle is controlled by party calculation, how miserable political expediency "rules the hour," answer these questions. Let the West, who will yet find out that their wishes have been trampled upon, and their hopes sacrificed to the new friends who have taken their place in the affections of the President, answer these questions.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, this bill, or rather these "instructions" for a bill are presented to us. The gentleman from Illinois, (Mr. REYNOLDS,) who so amused the House yesterday, and to whose speech in favor of this bill I listened with so much pleasure, deprecated the introduction of party politics into this debate, and besought us to forget that we are divided by party lines upon this floor. He was for throwing oil upon these troubled waters of party strife, so that they might become smooth and unruffled—that this bark, freight-

ed with the interests and hopes of his constituents, might glide upon their calm and placid bosom to its desired haven. But I would ask the gentleman from Illinois, did the gentlemen from Indiana wish the winds of party to be hushed, and the waves to be still, when they were struggling for a seat upon this floor? Does the gentleman from Illinois believe, should this bill now reach its destined port, and ride in safety at its moorings, so that it and its advocates from Indiana can defy the tempest, that the winds will not be again invoked from their caves, that the tempest of political denunciation will not again howl and sweep before its fury every opponent of the present Administration? If political agitation was required before the election, will it not again be summoned to aid the friends of the Administration when success here shall have crowned their efforts? Let this bill pass, let these appropriations be made, and if the gentleman from Illinois still doubts that success here will be used for political effect at home, I would ask him to anticipate the future, and, in imagination, journey back with the Representatives from Indiana, when they shall return to lay before their constituents this bill and these appropriations, both the evidence and the reward of their zeal and their industry. He will find that their march will be one of triumph. "Well done, faithful servants," will greet them at every step; but to the ascriptions of praise and gratitude that will meet their "ravished ears," we can fancy them as saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto the gods, give thanks for the victory we have won;" not unto us, not unto us, but unto him, greater than us, the President, whom we serve, offer up you praise and gratitude. He it was who gave vigor to our efforts, added strength to our exertions, and enabled us to fight the fight and win the victory. And will you not, good people of Indiana, support him who has thus served and protected you? Did we not tell you upon the stump and at the hustings that he was your friend, and that we loved him, because he loved you? Did we not promise and pledge ourselves as his friends, and therefore knowing his wishes and his feelings, that the bill should pass, and the appropriations should be made? Have not our pledges been redeemed, and have not our promises been

"Like Adonis' gardens,  
Which one day bloomed, and fruitful were the next?"

And will you, can you, in the coming contest, desert us and him to whom you are indebted for this welcome gift?

Such, sir, will be their language to a confiding people; and who among that people will, at such a time, stop, in the revels of their joy, to scrutinize the journals of this House, and mark or note the political division of the ayes and noes upon the passage of the bill? They will only know that their predecessors were Whigs, and the bill failed; that their present members are friends of the Administration, and by their aid the bill has passed; and to the Administration must, therefore, be ascribed the glory and honor of the achievement. And, sir, if some one at that time perchance should dare to ask, if the President be our friend, why did he not, in his message, allude to this road? and why was there no estimate for it in the report of the Secretary?

"Fool, hold thy peace and be still, would be the reply. Do you not know that his policy was equal to his friendship? Do you not know that if he had recommended it in his message, and the Secretary had embraced it in his estimates, the factious Whigs of the House would have opposed it because *he* wished it, and might have defeated it from their hostility to him and to his measures? No. His refraining from recommending it was a violence done to his own feelings, and affords a stronger evidence of the personal sacrifices he is ready to make to advance the interests and secure the prosperity of the West!" Silenced by this, no other voice would be heard to break in with discordant tones upon the general joy of the State, and the President would be hailed as their friend and benefactor, and entitled to their love and support.

Will my friend from Illinois, if he is not already tired of my company, now journey with me to the Southern stump, and listen to the denunciations which will be poured upon the devoted head of the President by his friends there, by the honorable and eloquent gentleman from South Carolina who sits near me, (Mr. PICKENS,) when this bill, so obnoxious to them, shall have become a law? Does the gentleman from Illinois believe that they will be denunciations to which he will be compelled to listen? No, sir. In the South, he will be represented as a great moral reformer; as a foe to internal improvements; as one desirous of reducing the powers and expenditures of the Government within the limits of the strictest construction. His message will be appealed to. The report of his Secretary, prepared as "he directed," will be held up as the strongest evidence of his views and of his policy. The appropriations for the road were made, the South will be told, but in opposition to his wishes and to his opinions; and his message will prove that he regretted "that no instance had occurred since the establishment of the Government in which the Executive, though a component part of the legislative power, has interposed an objection to an appropriation bill on the sole ground of its extravagance." The South will hear, and may believe, that if the constitution and usage had allowed an objection to this bill of wasteful extravagance, a veto would have been interposed; but that the President had no power. He could only inculcate upon the Legislature lessons of economy. He could only warn them of the "earnest direction of the public mind to this subject, and of the strict responsibility to which they would be held." That the bill was passed in defiance of the remonstrances of the South, and in opposition to the declared opinions of the President. It was supported and carried by the Whigs from the North and the East, in order to cripple the resources of the Government, and lead to the creation of a national debt; that that national debt might render necessary another odious and hated *tariff*—that magic word, which is an "open sesame" to all their fears and all their prejudices. Around the doctrines of this message, every Southerner who, like the President, deprecates a national debt as a national curse—who, like him, is a foe to internal improvements made or aided by the means of Government—who, with him, is ready to resist the first steps of another system of protective duties, will be called to rally,

and every Southern State will be invoked by this message, as there explained, to support this champion of the South, who nobly stood by their principles and their interests, against the selfish claims of the West, and the prodigal and calculating extravagance of the North.

Such, sir, I honestly believe, my friend from Illinois would find the different arguments used, the opposite commentaries made, and the contradictory effects produced by the message of the President, and the passage of this bill, in the West and in the South.

But if a little unfounded and undeserved popularity of the President were to be all the effect of the passage of this bill, I would still say, let it pass—it is right; and I would still hope much and trust much in the intelligence of the people, to thwart the political gains of this Janus-faced policy. But there is a higher principle involved—a principle which soars above the mere political temporary advantages to be gained, either in the West or the South. The President inculcates economy, and warns us in the name of the people against extravagance and prodigality. If against these warnings this bill pass, I fear not its political influence upon one or the other of the great political parties of this country, so much as I fear that its tendency will be, by the misconstruction of *his* message and *our* acts, to lessen the confidence of the people in a representative government—so much as I fear the stab that may be given to the representative principle of the constitution. Weaken the confidence of the people in the fidelity and trustworthiness of those who represent them collectively in Congress; call upon them to compare the prodigality of their representatives with the greater vigilance of the Executive, and you prepare the way for Executive encroachments and Executive power. Teach them that the purse-strings of the nation are held with light and careless hands by us, and you teach them to believe that their treasures are safer when controlled by one man. The union of the purse and the sword will soon be regarded with complacency, and the transition to an elective monarchy may be gradual but easy.

I complain of this message and report, not for what they say, but for what they omit to say; not for sins of commission, but for sins of omission. The President considers himself, as he tells us, a component part of the legislative power; and between him and us our communication should be frank, manly, and decided. His responsibility should not be shunned, and ours should not be avoided. Let him show us upon every great question what are his opinions, and let us show the nation what are ours, and let each abide by the judgment of the people. If the President or his Secretary, therefore, after continued legislation in favor of this road, deem a further appropriation for its prosecution now improper, I wish he had said so, and had given us the grounds of his opinion to enlighten and to guide us. But if, on the other hand, he still desires that the appropriations should be made, I wish that he had assumed the responsibility of commending them in his message, or in his Secretary's report, to our judgment and our favor.

I do not intend to say that the opinions of the President would have controlled my vote. They ought not, and they should not do

it—but they would have received the respectful consideration and deference to which they are entitled, and my vote should then have been given according to the convictions of my judgment, the dictates of my conscience, and my duty to my country. But, after repeated estimates in favor of this road, in times as dark and gloomy as the present, are we not entitled to a reason for this change from the almost settled policy of the nation? After the large expenditures for its prosecution according to and in pursuance of the estimates of the Secretary, year after year, have we not a right to know why these estimates are now withheld, and the road is to be abandoned unfinished and incomplete? Have we not cause to complain that a message has been sent to us that can be presented in the West as not warring with their wishes; and in the South can be appealed to as confirming their views of public policy? I wish to know what the President thinks. Is he for or against this appropriation? “Under which king, Bezonian, speak?” I wish him to stand before the people, assuming his proper responsibility on this great question, as he has so boldly done on the sub-Treasury, for or against it. It is a dark boast of the Pagan mythology, says Bulwer, as to one of the eldest of the Pagan deities, “that none among mortals has lifted up its veil.” I wish to lift that veil, and show the features of the veiled prophet to his idolaters, such as they are, and then they may continue their worship, if they can.

With me, Mr. Speaker, I confess the struggle is a painful one between my belief that the road is called for by the great interests of the country, and my fear that the passing appropriations for it, under the circumstances to which I have referred, may do more wrong to the great representative principle of our Government, may do more to weaken the confidence of the people in the constitutional guardians of their Treasury, than fifty such roads could confer benefits upon those who ask them. And if the bill should now fail, it is a consolation to me to know that it will be but a postponement of its benefits; for, in times that are soon to come, and under better auspices, this measure must prevail.

But, whatever vote, Mr. Speaker, I may give upon the final passage of this bill, I am opposed to these proposed instructions upon other grounds. I consider it wrong in principle to instruct a standing committee to report a bill with definite sums and amounts, the propriety and extent of which it is the business of a committee to investigate and decide upon. Instructions may be, and probably are, proper upon a measure involving some great principle, and where, when the principle is once adopted by the House, the details of the bill only carry out that principle. The House may rightly instruct the Committee on the Judiciary to report a bill to abolish, in all cases, imprisonment for debt. The duty of the committee is then a simple and a plain one; the details of the bill are then only incidental to the principle adopted, and can be discussed as well in the House as in the committee room. But when the duties of the committee not only involve the question whether any appropriation should be made; and, if made, to what amount—when the amount must depend upon many contingencies—the state of the road, the money that can

in one year be profitably expended upon it, and the means and resources that can prudently be devoted to the object—all these are inquiries which are proper for a committee alone, and which cannot be examined or considered without a report of a committee or an estimate from the Treasury, in a House constituted as this is. If these instructions are to be given, let them, at least so far as the amount is concerned, be in blank. If the committee should neglect their duty, and will not or do not report, I will then vote for any resolution or call to compel them to make such a report. I am ready and willing to adopt any measure hereafter to afford to the friends of this road a hearing, that the sense of this House may be taken upon the justice of its claims. But I do not wish to depart from all parliamentary usage; and, by adopting these instructions, now declare that I have no confidence in a standing committee of this House, before that committee has been tried and is in default. I will send the memorial praying for the construction of this road to them; I will vote to instruct them to report, without unreasonable delay, their opinions and their reasons to this House, and I am willing to vote for a call upon the President and the Secretary for their opinions as to the expediency of this appropriation, to aid that committee in their deliberations, and assist us, not control us, in the judgment to which they and we may arrive.

I have thus, sir, presented frankly my views and opinions as to the deceptive and political management by which the claims of this road are darkened; and if the bill fail, the West should know by whose silence their hopes have been destroyed, and to what policy, their interests have been sacrificed.

